

## THE HERMIT

this thought brought great solace to the Hermit. Even on winter nights, when the eagles screamed among the peaks, and he heard the long howl of wolves about the sheep-cotes in the valley, he no longer felt any fear, but thought of those sounds as representing the evil voices of the world, and hugged himself in the seclusion of his cave. Sometimes, to keep himself awake, he composed lauds in honour of Christ and the saints, and they seemed to him so pleasant that he feared to forget them, so after much debate with himself he decided to ask a friendly priest, who sometimes visited him, to write them down; and the priest wrote them on comely sheepskin, which the Hermit dried and prepared with his own hands. When the Hermit saw them written they appeared to him so beautiful that he feared to commit the sin of vanity if he looked at them too often, so he hid them between two smooth stones in his cave, and vowed that he would take them out only once in the year, at Easter, when our Lord has risen and it is meet that Christians should rejoice. And this vow he faithfully kept; but, alas, when Easter drew near, he found he was looking forward to the blessed festival less because of our Lord's rising than because he should then be able to read his pleasant lauds written on fair sheepskin; and thereupon he took a vow that he would not look on the lauds till he lay dying.

So the Hermit, for many years, lived to the glory of God and in great peace of mind.